

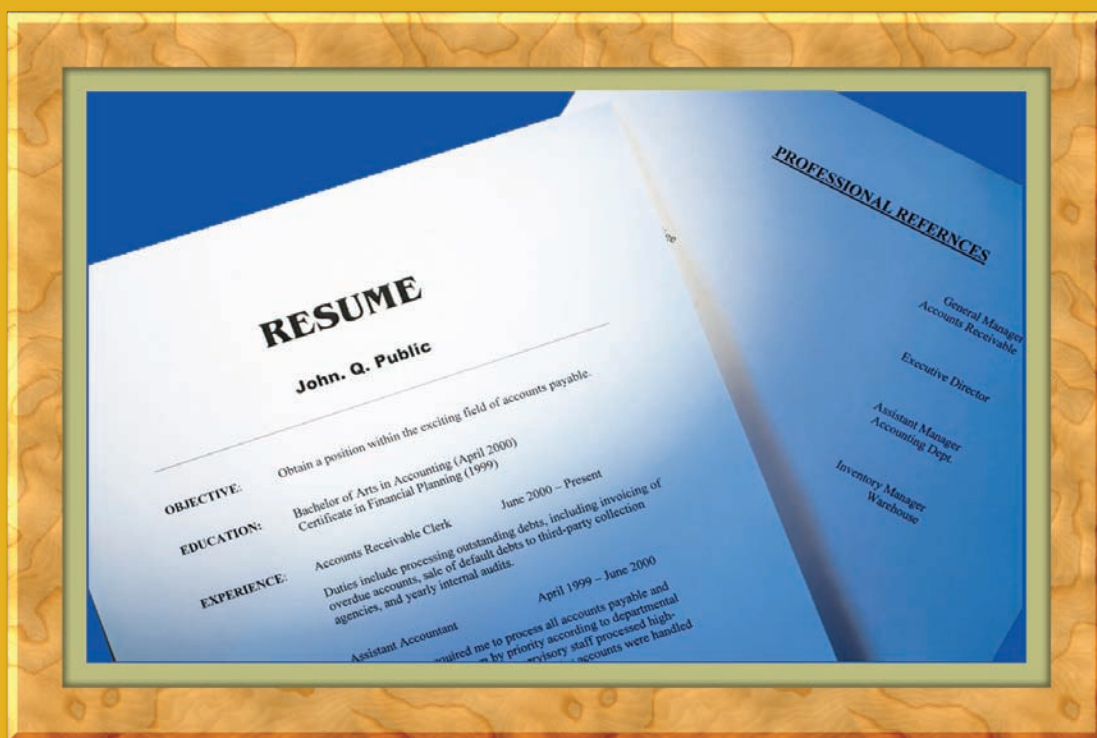
The FORUM

Virginia's Labor Market & Occupational Information Newsletter

Volume 9, Number 2

Fall 2009

This Issue's Focus: Writing Résumés for a Tough Job Market



PLUS: What's Your Job Search Style?

Welcome to the fall issue of *The Forum* newsletter.

Many economist believe that the country's economy is showing signs of recovery from the present recession. However, the national unemployment remains high at 9.5 percent and is predicted to reach double-digits before decreasing. Historically, the job market is one of the last areas to recover from a recession. With unemployment still on the rise, this issue will focus on tips for job searching and writing a successful résumé for this tough job market.

In This Issue:

Articles	Page
What's Your Job Search Style?	1
Focus: Résumés	4
Is My Résumé Being Read?	4
High-Definition (HD) Résumé: Making Things Crystal Clear	6
Cover Letters: Types and Samples	8
Interview Follow-up/Thank-You Letters	10
Websites That Offer Résumé and Cover Letter Assistance	12
Product Order Form	13

The Forum is a newsletter produced and distributed three times a year by the Virginia Employment Commission. It can be accessed at www.VirginiaLMI.com under Publications.

Editor: David R. Tysinger

Assistant Editor: Joan McDorman

Issue Content Research, Layout/Graphic Design: Linda Simmons

What's Your Job Search Style?

Selena Dehne, JIST Publishing
CareerBuilder.com



When it comes to the job search, some people overanalyze every step they take. Others don't think at all, taking one risk after another and hoping for positive results. In short, everyone has a particular style when it comes to how they participate in the job search process. Knowing what that style is can help

job seekers utilize their strengths and improve their weaknesses to find good jobs more quickly.

John Liptak, author of "Career Quizzes," divides job seekers into four categories: doers, preparers, energizers and thinkers. In his book, he emphasizes that none of the styles is any better than the other.

"The best job search strategy is the one that incorporates the best parts of your strongest style along with strategies you can learn to implement from weaker styles," Liptak says.

To discover which style best describes you and learn how to improve your performance in the job hunt, check out the descriptions and tips below, as outlined in Liptak's book.

The doer

Do you thrive on competition? Operate on a high-stress level? Continue pursuing something even though you've already been told "no"? If so, you may be a doer, Liptak says.

"People with a 'doer' job search style tend to be action-oriented, assertive, and stick with a task until it's finished."

Doers and the job hunt:

- ▶ Excel at selling themselves, following through on job search activities, building their network, and trumpeting their skills and experiences.

- ▶ Prefer aggressive job search strategies, such as directly calling an employer.
- ▶ Tend to lose patience with the job search.
- ▶ Sometimes come across as pushy or forget to listen during a job search interview.

How doers can improve their job search strategy

- ▶ Learn to know when assertiveness is detrimental to job search efforts.
- ▶ Think before acting to avoid alienating employers.
- ▶ Strive to relax and be patient.
- ▶ Develop a portfolio of accomplishments to show employers.
- ▶ Create a great résumé and cover letter to show prospective employers.

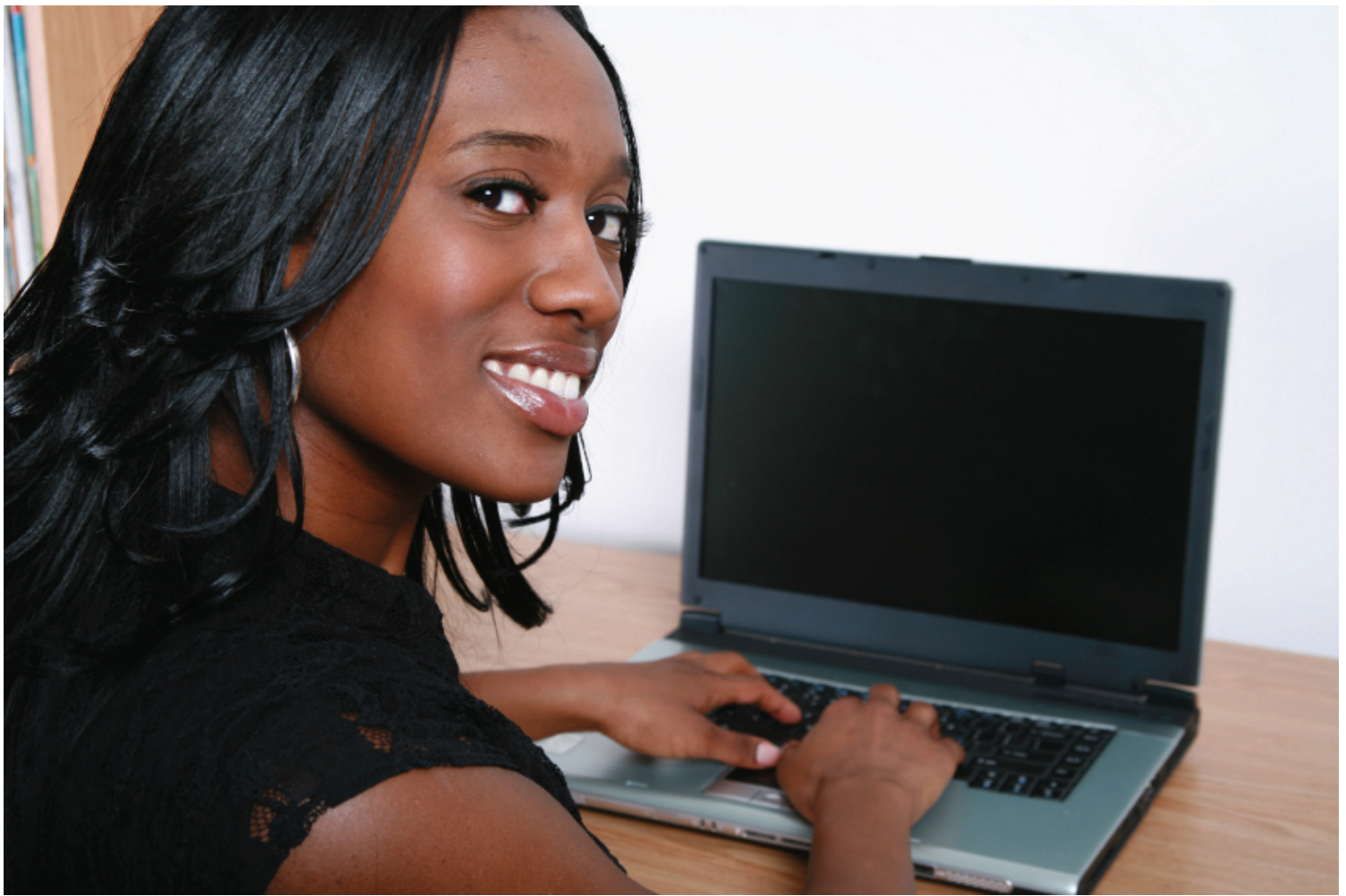
The preparer

Preparers are generally well-organized, adept planners who find comfort in routine and prefer to keep a low profile, Liptak says.

"They carry out their well-designed plans in a thorough and persistent manner, although often without any outward show of enthusiasm. Their fear of change can become debilitating, but in a stable and predictable environment, they are friendly and warm and have a tremendous desire to succeed."

Preparers and the job hunt:

- ▶ Remain calm in the job search and take rejection in stride.
- ▶ Tend to be responsive listeners with an easygoing nature and affable personality that makes for a comfortable interview environment.
- ▶ Sometimes struggle to sell themselves because they lack assertiveness.



- ▶ Inclined to rely too heavily on the visible job market, prompting them to underutilize more aggressive techniques like phoning employers or building a job search network.

How preparers can improve their job search strategy

- ▶ Become more assertive in self-marketing.
- ▶ Learn to never take “no” for an answer.
- ▶ Build a network of potential employers.
- ▶ Strive to enjoy talking with prospective employers.
- ▶ Take action after thorough preparations.

The energizer

Liptak describes energizers as the “free spirits” of the job hunt, because they tend to be adventurous risk-takers. “Unlike preparers, energizers have a high energy level and a great deal of enthusiasm, although they often need help channeling their energy in

constructive ways. Energizers get along well with almost anyone, enjoy a variety of tasks and are open to change,” Liptak says.

Energizers and the job hunt:

- ▶ Generally willing to use all job search methods and will even discover their own innovative strategies.
- ▶ Often viewed as charismatic and enthusiastic during interviews, provided they aren’t seen as hyper or chaotic.
- ▶ Have difficulty organizing job search campaigns, because they can sometimes be impulsive and careless.
- ▶ Excellent networkers, but tend to have difficulty translating their energy and enthusiasm to paper. Thus, they tend to excel in interviews, provided they haven’t been screened out by a sloppy résumé or lack of attention to detail.

How energizers can improve their job search strategy

- ▶ Learn to curb impulsiveness.
- ▶ Appreciate the value of tools such as résumés, cover letters, and employment applications (and working to make them professional).
- ▶ Learn not to be sensitive to criticism and rejections.
- ▶ Use creativity to find ways to impress employers.
- ▶ Mind the small details of an effective job search campaign (such as keeping track of résumés sent out, replies from prospective employers, interview dates, and follow-up activities).

The thinker

“Thinkers are logical in all that they do—the Mr. Spocks of the job search style universe,” Liptak says. He goes on to describe them as perfectionists who are generally willing to spend a great deal of energy to complete projects and get them right. Liptak adds that thinkers often get bogged down in details and fail to “see the forest for the trees.”

Thinkers and the job hunt:

- ▶ Tend to prefer traditional job search methods, such as mailing out a résumé rather than directly calling an employer.
- ▶ Are highly skilled at résumé and cover letter writing and preparing for interviews.
- ▶ Tend to become overwhelmed by the insignificant aspects of the job search and lose sight of the big picture.
- ▶ Sometimes come off as reserved and unenthusiastic during job interviews.

How thinkers can improve their job search strategy

- ▶ Rely less on logic and more on gut feelings.
- ▶ Be less critical.
- ▶ Be more flexible.



- ▶ Be more aggressive with employers.
- ▶ Develop a network of prospective employers.
- ▶ Don't overanalyze the minor details of a job search campaign.

Source: Selena Dehne is a career writer for JIST Publishing who shares the latest occupational, career, and job search information available with job seekers and career changers. She is also the author of JIST's Job Search and Career Blog (<http://jistjobsearchandcareer.blogspot.com/>).

As a general rule
the most successful
man in life is the
man who has the best
information.

Benjamin Disraeli
British politician (1804 - 1881)



FOCUS

With the stiff competition for jobs in this tight job market, any advantage will help. The focus for this issue is the résumé. A well-thought-out and executed résumé can help distinguish you from other job applicants. It is also important to write a résumé that will be applicable to the job for which you are applying. With résumés, one size does not fit all.

Is My Résumé Being Read?

Anthony Balderrama, CareerBuilder.com writer

If you've watched the news lately, you've seen a reporter standing at a job fair and a line of job seekers winding out the door. Inevitably the reporter interviews an employer who says that for a few open positions, hundreds of applicants have submitted résumés.

You immediately wonder: How many of those applications actually get read?

In a perfect world, hiring managers would have plenty of time to thoroughly read every single résumé that comes across their desks and contact each person to explain why the company is choosing someone else. In reality, the job seekers outnumber available positions in today's job market, and hiring managers are too busy to hold your hand through every step of the process.

In fact, you're lucky if you hear back at all. Many companies contact you only if they want more information or to schedule an interview. You never know if you didn't qualify for the job or if your résumé was ever even looked at.

Résumé neverland

"I'm pretty sure that résumé neverland exists—especially in a completely flooded job-hunting climate due to the poor economy," says Kristen Fischer, the author of "Ramen Noodles, Rent and Résumés: An After-College Guide to Life." "With so many people applying for jobs, it's easy to discard a résumé based simply on a typo or unpleasant formatting."

Of course, job seekers can (and should) avoid typos with proofreading. But the bigger fear is that powers out of their control could sabotage their job prospects.

"Résumés submitted online can also disappear into the cyber black hole," Fischer says. She says these online abysses are often the result of generic email addresses, which can mean all applications funnel into one account even if they're for separate positions. Or worse, applications and general business questions go to the same destination.

Even if you can't prevent the black hole from existing, you can do your best to get your application out of there.

Be proactive

Rather than take your chances with the proverbial résumé black hole, you should be proactive when you apply for work, says Justin Honaman, author of "Make It Happen! Live Out Your Personal Brand."

"There is no doubt that hitting the 'submit' button and hoping [or] praying is probably not the only way to approach an opportunity," he says. "When positions are posted on a company's Website, my experience has been that I receive a huge number of submissions, and at times, more than 80 percent of the applicants are not even qualified for the position. Most recruiters follow a multistep evaluation approach."

According to Honaman, recruiters and hiring managers ask three questions when they receive applications from job seekers:

- ▶ **Does candidate meet the minimum criteria for the position?** The minimum criteria might include a certain level of education, years of experience or certification.
- ▶ **Is the candidate still in the running even after she has stated her requirements or wishes for the position?** If an applicant's salary requirements or unwillingness to relocate conflicts with the needs of the job, then the employer might remove him or her from consideration.
- ▶ **Does the candidate bring more to the table than the defined position requirements?** Employers are happy to have someone who fulfills the requirements of the position, but they're even happier to hire someone who brings additional assets.

Why do you care about this? Because once you submit your application and it passes these hurdles, it doesn't

mean you're out of résumé neverland. You're still just one of many applicants who can get lost in the shuffle, even in the most efficient hiring department.

According to Honaman, a multipronged method of attack is the best way to guarantee you're not overlooked:

1. Online résumé submission

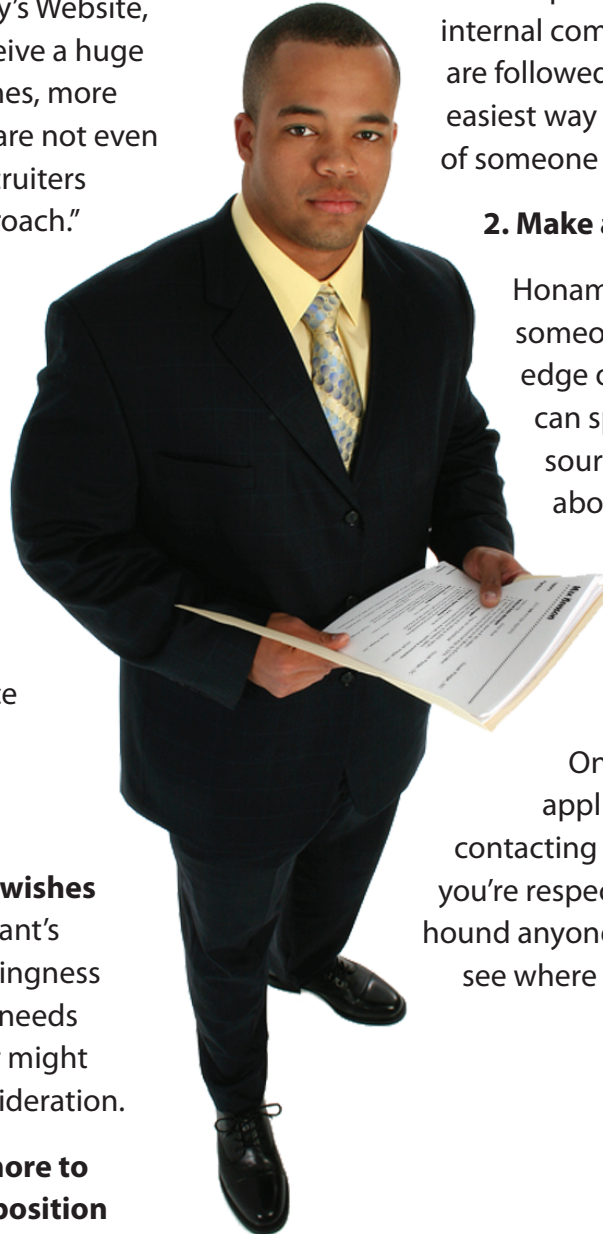
"Most companies require this to ensure internal company recruiting processes are followed," Honaman says. Plus, it's the easiest way to get your name in the hands of someone at the company.

2. Make a personal connection

Honaman suggests networking with someone in the company to get an edge over other applicants. If you can speak with a knowledgeable source who can offer information about the hiring manager, the team or the position, you'll have more insight on what the employer's looking for.

3. Appropriate follow-up

Once you've submitted your application, Honaman recommends contacting the company again, as long as you're respectful and professional. Don't hound anyone about the job, just check in to see where the process stands.



Source: Anthony Balderrama is a writer and blogger for CareerBuilder.com and its job blog, *The Work Buzz*. He researches and writes about job search strategy, career management, hiring trends, and workplace issues.

High-Definition (HD) Résumé: Making Things Crystal Clear

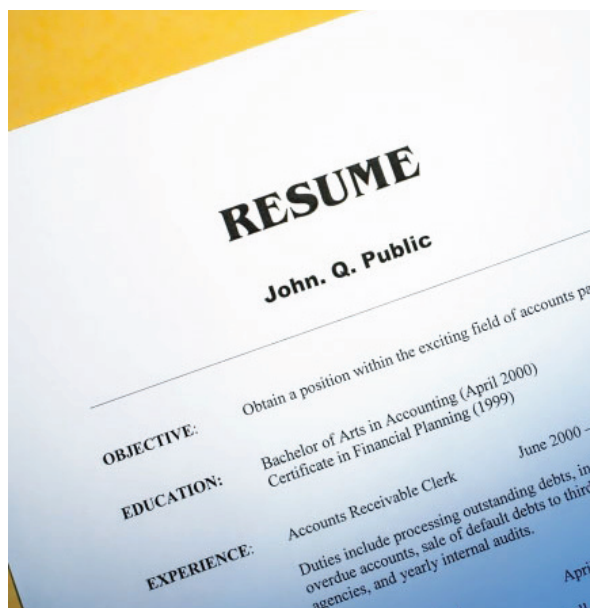
By now you've heard several times that the job market is competitive and it's more important than ever that you stand out to employers through your cover letter and résumé.

Well, you're about to hear it again.

"While it is always important to have a remarkable résumé, a bad economy makes it even more important," says Kathy Sweeney, a certified professional résumé writer for The Write Résumé.

"With this situation in mind, it is more important than ever to communicate the value you bring to a potential employer."

Here are a few pearls of wisdom: Communicating your value to an employer is not done by crowding your résumé with phrases like "results driven" or "motivated." It won't be done by listing what you think is an impressive list of job duties, and it sure as heck won't be done by sending out one standard résumé for every application. None of these mistakes will help pave your way for an interview, but you can bet they will aid in digging your career grave.



So what is the easiest way to grab an employer's attention? Simple: Spell things out for them.

"The primary function of a résumé is to get a candidate noticed in an effort to gain interviews," Sweeney says. "It is a marketing document, in which a candidate sells his or her value to the employer. If the meat of the résumé is simply job duties, it will not do the job seeker any favors."

If you need help creating your high-definition résumé, here are five common résumé errors you might be making, and how you can make things crystal clear for employers:

1. You aren't quantifying results

Applicants often don't know the difference between quantifying results and just stating a job responsibility. A job responsibility is something that you do on a daily basis and a quantified achievement is the result of that responsibility, Sweeney says.

"In this tight economy, employers want to know whether you can make or save them money," Sweeney says. "By quantifying results, you show the next employer the results you have been able to obtain, either in dollar figures, percentages or comparative numbers."

To truly impress an employer, you need to highlight situations where you went above and beyond your normal job duties. If you developed a process or procedure that reduced time in completing a certain task, finished a project 10 days ahead of schedule or recommended a way to cut costs, include those in your résumé, Sweeney says. All of these can be calculated out to show dollars saved for an employer.

2. You didn't include keywords

We hear a lot about using keywords in our résumés and letters, but many job seekers just don't get it. They don't know what they are, where to find them or how to include them in their résumé.

Keywords are usually found in the job description for an available position. Keywords are not "team player" or "good communication skills," Sweeney says. Keywords are specific to the position. For an accountant, for example, keywords might include "accounts payable," "accounts receivable" or "month-end reporting."

"The whole goal from an employer's perspective is to drill down to the least amount of candidates possible for interviewing purposes," Sweeney says. "Keywords are utilized to trim down applicants to the most qualified candidates."

3. You buried your achievements

Perhaps you did list some accomplishments on your résumé, but they are mixed in with your job duties. What good is that going to do you? This method will not allow an employer to quickly assess your ability to produce results, which is ultimately why they want to hire you.

"If a candidate buries his achievement in a job description, nothing is going to stand out. A job seeker needs to outline what his duties are, as those are what most often match the job posting," Sweeney says. "On a job posting, you will see duties listed. For instance, 'Candidate will be charged with creating relationships with customers and selling XYZ product line.' However, job postings will never say, 'Must produce at least \$5 million per year in revenue.' While it is important to list that you 'develop relationships and sell products' as a job duty, you need to separate your daily functions from your results, as employers do not want to 'wade through' your job descriptions to identify your achievements."

In order to make your achievements stand out, Sweeney suggests listing the job duties first in paragraph format, and then incorporate a bulleted area below the paragraph entitled "key accomplishments" to list your achievements.

4. You didn't include a summary

Including a summary on your résumé is one of those steps that many job seekers forget to take—and if they do remember, they usually include the wrong information. Your career summary should portray your experience and emphasize how it will help the prospective employer, Sweeney says. It should be very specific and include explicit industry-related functions, quantifiable achievements or your areas of expertise.

"You will lose an employer's attention if this section is too broad," Sweeney says. "Know the type of position you are targeting and use the keywords that relate to it based upon your background."

5. Your résumé isn't targeted

The best way to make things clear for an employer is to target your résumé to that company and its open positions. If your résumé is generic, it makes the employer have to guess at the type of position you want.

"Human resources managers do not have time to figure out what position will best suit a candidate," Sweeney says. "Let an employer know where you fit into their company."

You should target all areas of your résumé to match what the employer is asking for—if nothing else, change the summary, because it will be the first area read by hiring managers, Sweeney says. "Look at what is important in the position posting. Then, tweak your profile and perhaps some of your position descriptions to match your qualifications to the position," she adds.

Now what?

Now that you've got your HD résumé, you need to put it in front of the right pair of eyes. Don't just post it to a job board and wait for something to happen. Utilize your networks, post on social and professional networking sites, and answer questions on industry forums or blogs in a well-thought-out manner, Sweeney suggests.

"You might have a great résumé, but if no one can find it, it defeats the purpose," Sweeney says.

Source: Rachel Zupke is a writer and blogger for CareerBuilder.com and its job blog, *The Work Buzz*. She researches and writes about job search strategy, career management, hiring trends and workplace issues. Follow her on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CBwriterRZ>.

Cover Letters: Types and Samples

Career Services @ Virginia Tech

The guidelines here apply to both hard copy correspondence and email. The main difference between email and hard copy correspondence is format: your signature block (address, etc.) goes below your name in email, while it goes at the top of the page on hard copy. Of course you won't have a handwritten signature on email, but don't forget this on hard copy.



All cover letters should:

Explain why you are sending a résumé.

Don't send a résumé without a cover letter. Don't make the reader guess what you are asking for; be specific: Do you want a summer internship opportunity, or a permanent position at graduation; are you inquiring about future employment possibilities?

Tell specifically how you learned about the position or the organization—a flyer posted in your department, a website, a family friend who works at the organization. It is appropriate to mention the name of someone who suggested that you write.

Convince the reader to look at your résumé.

The cover letter will be seen first. Therefore, it must be very well written and targeted to that employer.

Call attention to elements of your background—education, leadership, experience—that are relevant to a position you are seeking. Be as specific as possible, using examples.

Reflect your attitude, personality, motivation, enthusiasm, and communication skills.

Provide or refer to any information specifically requested in a job advertisement that might not be covered in your résumé, such as availability date, or reference to an attached writing sample.

Indicate what you will do to follow-up.

- **In a letter of application**—applying for an advertised opening—applicants often say something like "I look forward to hearing from you." However, if you have further contact info (e.g. phone number) and if the employer hasn't said "no phone calls," it's better to take the initiative to follow-up, saying something like, "I will contact you in the next two weeks to see if you require any additional information regarding my qualifications."

- **In a letter of inquiry**—asking about the possibility of an opening—don't assume the employer will contact you. You should say something like, "I will contact you in two weeks to learn more about upcoming employment opportunities with (name of organization)." Then mark your calendar to make the call.

Sample Cover Letter Format Guidelines:

Your Street Address
City, State Zip Code
Telephone Number
Email Address

Month, Day, Year

Mr./Ms./Dr. FirstName LastName
Title
Name of Organization
Street or P. O. Box Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. LastName:

Opening paragraph: State why you are writing; how you learned of the organization or position, and basic information about yourself.

2nd paragraph: Tell why you are interested in the employer or type of work the employer does (Simply stating that you are interested does not tell why, and can sound like a form letter). Demonstrate that you know enough about the employer or position to relate your background to the employer or position. Mention specific qualifications which make you a good fit for the employer's needs. This is an opportunity to explain in more detail relevant items in your résumé. Refer to the fact that your résumé is enclosed. Mention other enclosures if such are required to apply for a position.

3rd paragraph: Indicate that you would like the opportunity to interview for a position or to talk with the employer to learn more about their opportunities or hiring plans. State what you will do to follow up, such as telephone the employer within two weeks. If you will be in the employer's location and could offer to schedule a visit, indicate when. State that you would be glad to provide the employer with any additional information needed. Thank the employer for her/his consideration.

Sincerely,
(Your handwritten signature)
Your name typed
Enclosure(s) (refers to résumé, etc.)

(Note: the contents of your letter might best be arranged into four paragraphs. Consider what you need to say and use good writing style.)

Interview Follow-up/Thank-You Letters

Interviews are not over when they're over: Follow up.

Purpose

Following an interview, promptly (within 2 business days) write the interviewer a letter expressing appreciation and thanks for the interview. The purpose of this letter is to:

- ▶ Show appreciation for the employer's interest in you.
- ▶ Reiterate your interest in the position and in the organization.
- ▶ Review or remind the employer about your qualifications for the position. If you thought of something you forgot to mention in the interview, mention it in your follow-up/thank-you letter.
- ▶ Demonstrate that you have good manners and know to write a thank-you letter.
- ▶ Follow up with any information the employer may have asked you to provide after the interview.

Thank you for initial interview—sample:

Ms. Glenna Wright
Human Resources Manager
Fashion Department Store
2000 Line Drive
Fairfax, VA 22030

Dear Ms. Wright:

I enjoyed interviewing with you during your recruiting visit to Virginia Tech on October 25. The management trainee program you outlined sounds both challenging and rewarding, and I look forward to your decision concerning an on-site visit.

As mentioned during the interview, I will be graduating in December with a bachelor's degree in Fashion Merchandising. Through my education and experience I've gained many skills, as well as an understanding of retailing concepts and dealing with the general public. I have worked seven years in the retail industry in various positions from Sales Clerk to Assistant Department Manager. I think my education and work experience would complement Fashion's management trainee program.

I have enclosed a copy of my college transcript and a list of references that you requested.

Thank you again for the opportunity to interview with Fashion Department Store. The interview served to reinforce my strong interest in becoming a part of your management team. I can be reached at (540) 555-1111 or by email at boles@vt.edu should you need additional information.

Sincerely,

Marianne Boles

Enclosures



Hard copy, handwritten or email?

Thank-you letters can be hard copy typed, handwritten or emailed. Hard copy letters are most formal and appropriate after an interview. Handwritten letters are more personal and can be appropriate for brief notes to a variety of individuals you may have met during an on-site interview. Email is appropriate when that has been your means of contact with the person you want to thank, or if your contact has expressed a preference for email.

What to do if you don't hear from the employer

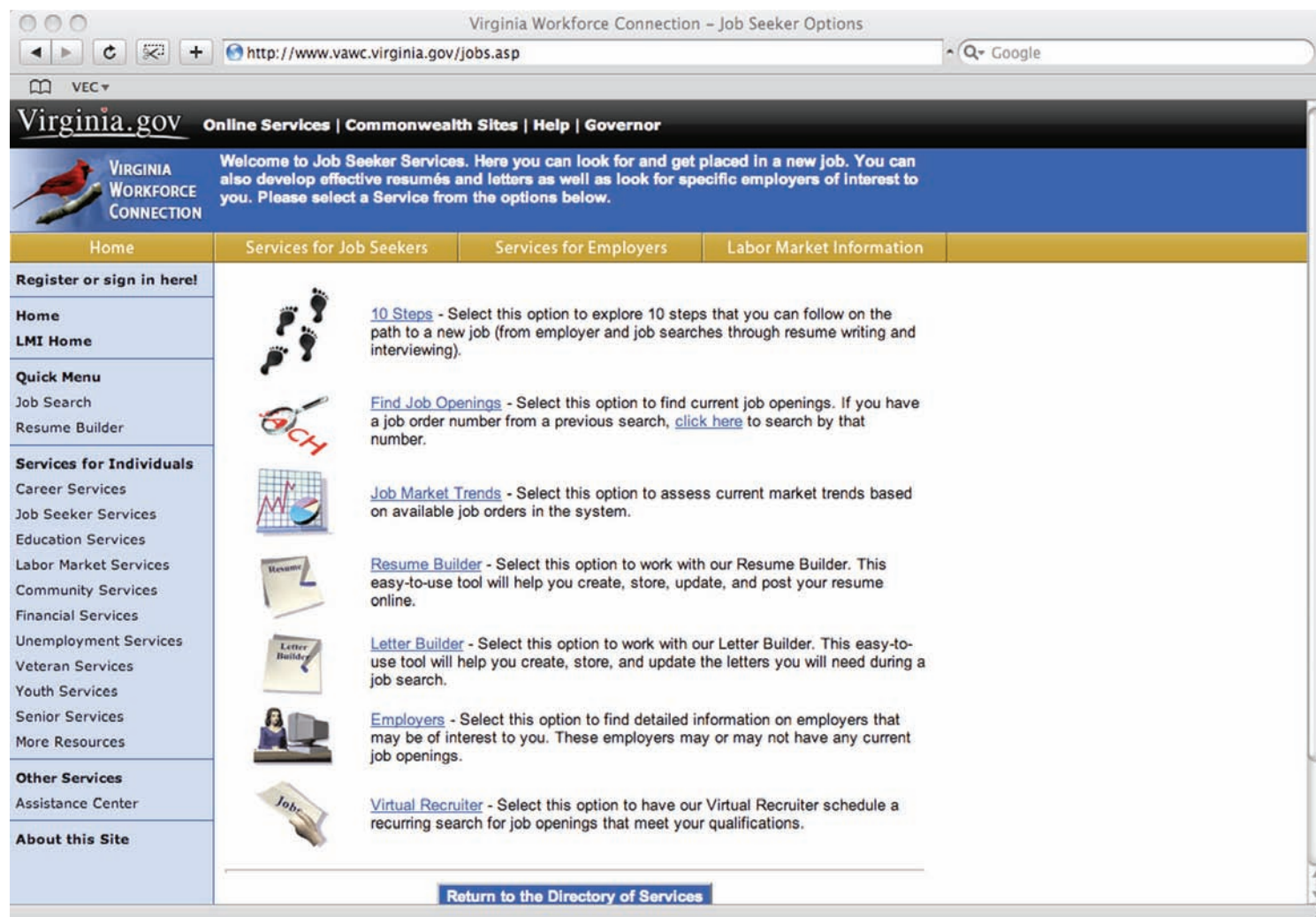
Before your interview ended, your interviewer should have informed you of the organization's follow-up procedures—from whom, by what means, and when you would hear again from the organization. If the interviewer did not tell you, and you did not ask, use your follow-up/thank-you letter to ask.

If more than a week has passed beyond the date when you were told you would hear something from the employer, call or email to politely inquire about the status of the organization's decision-making process. Someone, (or something), or an unexpected circumstance may be holding up the process. A polite inquiry shows that you are still interested in the organization and may prompt the employer to get on schedule with a response. In your inquiry, mention the following: name of the person who interviewed you, time and place of the interview, position for which you are applying (if known), and ask the status of your application.

This article contains excerpts from the Virginia Tech Career Services website. The full article and more samples of cover letters/thank-you letters can be found at: <http://www.career.vt.edu/JOBSEARCH/JOBSPG1.HTM>.

Websites That Offer Résumé and Cover Letter Assistance

<http://www.vawc.virginia.gov/jobs.asp> - helps job seekers research jobs, write résumés and cover letters, and more.



<http://www.pongorésumé.com> - All the tools, templates, and support you need to write professional résumés and cover letters. This site is accredited by the Better Business Bureau.

<http://www.bestsamplerésumé.com> - On *best sample résumés*, you will find sample résumés for different needs. We also provide information on how to write a job résumé, résumé templates, and résumé examples.

<http://www.résuméformat.org> - The site aims to give you up-to-date information on how to write good résumés.

The winter issue of *The Forum*
will be available at:

www.VirginiaLMI.com

on Friday, January 8, 2010

If you would like to receive an email notification when the next issue is available, please send your request to:

Linda Simmons—linda.simmons@vec.virginia.gov

Product Order Form

These products are available at no charge, except where noted.

Item	Description	Quantity
Bookmarks	The high school graduate vs. the high school dropout	
Job Interview Pocket Résumé	Small tri-fold reference résumé that fits in a wallet or pocket	
Virginia's Mid-Atlantic Guide to Information on Careers (MAGIC)	Contains information on education, job training, job-seeking, and careers—Minimal fee charged for orders outside of Virginia—also available on the VEC website*	
Virginia Business Resource Directory	How to start your own business—also available on the VEC website*	Hard copy CD-ROM
Virginia Job Outlook—Temporarily out of stock (still available online)	Brochure with top occupations, growth rate, and annual average salaries by educational attainment—also available on the VEC website*	
Display Posters	Qualities Needed for Success in the Workplace—24"x18"	
	Visualize - Starting Your Own Business—24"x18"	
	Interview Tips—18"x 24"	
One-Page Information Sheets—camera-ready versions to print multiple copies	Eight Keys to Employability	
	Tomorrows Jobs	
	Sample Application Form	
	Ten Most-Wanted Skills	
	Education Pays...	
Available only on the VEC website*		
Virginia Labor Market Information Directory	Listing and description of VEC publications, products, special services, and data delivery systems—reference material only	
Industry and Occupational Employment Projections: 2006-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginia • Workforce Investment Areas (WIAs) • United States 	
Occupational Wage Data Report: 2007	Reference material only for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United States • Statewide, Virginia • Workforce Investment Areas (WIAs) • Virginia Metropolitan Wage Data (MSAs) • Occupational Employment Statistical Regions Planning Districts • Planning District Commissions (PDCs) 	

*VaEmploy.Com

To order materials, please indicate the number of items requested in the space to the right of the product name and mail or fax to:

Virginia Employment Commission

LMDA, Room 324
P.O. Box 1358
Richmond, VA 23218-1358
Telephone (804) 786-5880
Fax (804) 786-7844

For large orders, please make sure that the address you list is for a physical location (not a P.O. box) and that you include the name of a contact person.

Please feel free to make copies of this order form.

Name:		
Organization:		
Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Telephone ()		
Email Address:		
Is this order for a scheduled event?	Yes	
	If yes, date needed by: (Please allow 5-7 business days for delivery)	
	No	

Shipping Charge (VEC Staff Only)

Cost Center

Project Code

Function Code